

County Communication Efforts During Storm Response

CountyStat Discussion
23 April 2010

CountyStat Principles

- **Require Data-Driven Performance**
- **Promote Strategic Governance**
- **Increase Government Transparency**
- **Foster a Culture of Accountability**



Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Meeting Goal and Purpose
- Departmental Self Review of February Storm Communications
- Potential External Emergency Communication Best Practices
 - Education/Preparedness
 - Public Messaging
 - Responding to Public Needs
 - Soliciting Public Feedback
- Wrap-up and Follow-up Items
- Appendix:
 - Review of Communication Issues In AAR
 - Additional Potential Best Practices



Meeting Goal

Purpose

- Discuss departmental reflections on recent storm emergency communications
- Examine areas for improvement identified in the February blizzard AAR
- Identify opportunities to expand the County's capacity for effective communication during emergency events
- Discuss potential best practices of local jurisdictions

Key Issues:

- Understanding the importance of not only pushing out information, but shaping a joint message to the public
- Employing two-way versus one-way communication with the public during an emergency
- Maximizing opportunities to increase capacity without incurring excessive additional costs to residents
- Leveraging internal subject-matter expertise through effective collaboration

This presentation uses the recent blizzards as an example, however these best practices can be applied to any emergency



Departmental Self Reviews of February Blizzard Communications

Public Information Office Self Review

Areas of Communication Responsibility

- Provided timely, accurate, and effective communication from the County government to the public, County employees, businesses, elected officials, civic groups, and every other segment of the Montgomery County community through the mass media, Internet, social media, email distribution lists, and cable television programming.

Communication Strengths During Storm Response:

- A dedicated staff, committed to working around the clock to provide accurate and clear messages in timely way.
- An efficient and immediate distribution system for information via email, the County website, and social media (FaceBook, Twitter, and YouTube).

Communication Areas for Improvement:

- Develop a way to archive the rapidly-changing home page emergency information box with its links to emergency information and news releases.
- This can currently be done, but it requires twice the amount of work, and that is difficult when changes are being made frequently and we have limited resources.



Pubic Information Office Self Review: Methods of Communication

- Press releases, emailed to a large distribution list, posted on the County website under “news” and highlighted on the County home page in the “Winter Storm Information” box.
- Press releases, emailed to the Office of Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security, were distributed as Alert Montgomery messages to subscribers.
- County Home page “Winter Storm Information” box, which evolves by the hour with new information and timely links to relevant websites.
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, with links back to the full press releases and any relevant web sites for more information and contact information.
- *Isiah Leggett Reports* electronic newsletter.
- Briefings to press from representatives of the County Executive’s Office, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation.
- Direct email messages to County employees.
- Cable Television programs on County Cable Montgomery (Channel 6 for Comcast and RCN; 30 for Verizon);
- YouTube postings of winter storm tips: 12/25/09 on the December blizzard, 01/08/10 Cold Weather Safety Tips, and 02/12/10 safety tips:



Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Self Review

Areas of Communication Responsibility

- Alert Montgomery
- Approximately 20 media interviews (2 video and the rest phone)
- Situation Reports
- Internal – County situational awareness conference calls

Communication Strengths During Storm Response:

- 10 All-user alerts. Many devices have batteries allowing for the message to get through. Messages were truncated to many of these devices
- Internal communication – Conference Calls/WebEOC/Mission tasking

Communication Areas for Improvement:

- PIO office should follow the FEMA Media Guide best practices during emergencies
- GIS support throughout the activation
- Talking Points for senior officials
- Internal – Training in WebEOC



Department of Transportation Self Review

Areas of Communication Responsibility

- Storm Operations Center (SOC)
- DOT Storm Summary Reports
- Snow Application – Web based program
- Email updates to the Council informing of progress and changes in operational modes (i.e. snow removal, trucking salt, etc.)
- Media updates
- EMG/EOC conference calls
- Internal DOT communications
- Communications with PIO
- Composing updates for web posting

Communication Strengths During Storm Response:

- SOC Summary reports
- Snow application functionality as used for progress reporting and resource assignment.
- Media relations
- EMG conference calls

Communication Areas for Improvement:

- Communications with the public with a contemporary AVL map based snow tracking / reporting system
- Updates to Council staff
- County website updates
- The use of Facebook and Twitter



MC311 Customer Service Center Self Review

Areas of Communication Responsibility

- 24/7 Snow Operations Call Center through 240-777-6000

Communication Strengths During Storm Response:

- Strength in numbers – if the storm had happened last winter, there would have been only six agents to answer calls
- Ability to quickly ramp to 50 agents due to facility and infrastructure availability
- Can answer questions on a wide variety of County programs and services, not just Highway Maintenance/Snow Removal Operations

Communication Areas for Improvement:

- Better tracking of “incidental” needs – caller wanted to know when the plows would arrive, but also mentions that they are housebound and need food
- Department volunteer orientation and tracking strategies
- Better process for channeling and categorizing email communications



Office of Human Resources Self Review

Areas of Communication Responsibility

- Communicating detailed information to all County employees clarifying the status of County Government operations during the snow storms in February and to provide (in conjunction with MCtime) guidance to employees when recording time related to the snow storms.

Communication Strengths During Storm Response:

- Provided specific information to managers and employees as opposed to leaving room for guessing and errors.
- Showed that OHR made every effort to communicate information to employees as quickly as possible.

Communication Areas for Improvement:

- Create a Countywide list of essential employees
- Generate pre-developed memorandum templates for faster response
- Active participation in EMG conference calls
- Provide written description of the 'GEN' code as well as guidance and support for tracking use
- Create procedure for alerting employees of liberal leave when the leave is issued mid-day
- Create a single source for disseminating information on facility closures
- Balance direct communication to County employees with direct communication to Department HR Liaisons and Directors regarding timekeeping practices



Office of Human Resources Self Review: Essential Employee Designation

- OHR received several questions from some departments requesting to know what positions are essential and non-essential for their department
- OHR feels that the current list is out of date
- Personnel Regulations state that the Office of Human Resources must maintain the County list of essential employees
- Departments are responsible for designating who are their essential employees
- OHR cannot designate which positions are essential
- Departments will need to make every effort to review each position and its designation
- OHR recommends departments send OHR an updated list every quarter
- OHR will send departments a reminder on a semi annual basis to check and update the listing of essential and non-essential employees.

Current County Essential Employees

CORRECTION & REHABILITATION	500
COUNTY EXECUTIVE	5
DTS TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	21
EMG MGMT & HOMELAND SECURITY	9
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	21
FIN FINANCE	4
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE	1135
GENERAL SERVICES	288
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	49
HOUSING & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	2
LIQUOR CONTROL	263
POLICE	1403
REGIONAL SERVICES CENTERS	44
SHERIFF	151
TRANSPORTATION	1050
Grand Total	4945



External Emergency Communication Best Practices

Categories of External Emergency Communication Best Practices

- Communications best practices during an all-hazard event can be summarized into four subsets
- Effective communication during each of these stages ensures that the County provides optimum customer service levels during an event

Example: Winter Storm Emergency Communication

Education/Preparedness: Prior to storm season, educate the public on storm operations to help mitigate impact and manage expectations

Public Messaging: During initial stages of storm, effectively articulate current situation and expectations to the public

Responding to Public: While storm response is ongoing, respond to the needs of the public in a transparent manner

Soliciting Feedback: After the storm response is completed, actively engage the public to discuss lessons learned/best practices



Current Montgomery County Snow Emergency Educational/Preparedness Practices

DOT Snow Frequently Asked Questions Page:

- Contains basic information on what to do during a snow emergency and general points on snow operations
- Site was often linked to during the snow emergency as the primary source of guidance on snow operations
- Existing FAQ page is not dynamic and does not provide adequate explanation of the existing snow operations system

DOT “When It Snows” Brochure:

- Provides contact information, an overview of storm operations, Dos and Don'ts during a storm, expected times to complete plowing, guidance on side walk clearing, and reporting potholes
- Brochure is currently printed and distributed, but not available online

Segments in “County Report” Videos

- Portions of weekly “County Report” segments, aired on County Cable as well as YouTube speak to impact of snow fall in the region and MCFRS winter warnings
- Video content is not exclusive to winter storm preparedness or education

Investing in extensive educational materials prepares residents for the challenges they face during an emergency

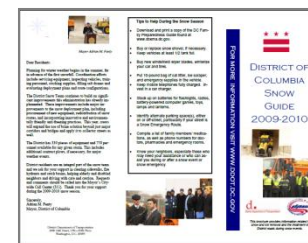


Potential Educational/Preparedness Best Practices

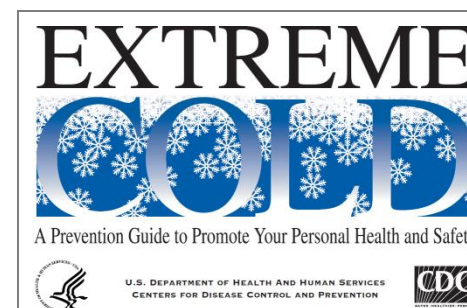
- **Arlington County YouTube Video – “Snow Plow Questions”**
 - Includes visual footage of snow removal operations
 - Provides viewers with perspective of snow removal frontline employees as well as from department managers
 - Focuses on tips for snow removal as well as outline the county’s snow operations strategy
- **DC Snow Preparations Brochure**
 - Similar in format and content to Montgomery County Snow Brochure
 - Available to download and view online
- **CDC Extreme Cold Brochure**
 - Includes prevention and preparation tips for seasonal weather
 - Provides tips for vulnerable populations



Arlington County Educational Video
(Click Image to View)



DC Snow Brochure
(Click Image to View)

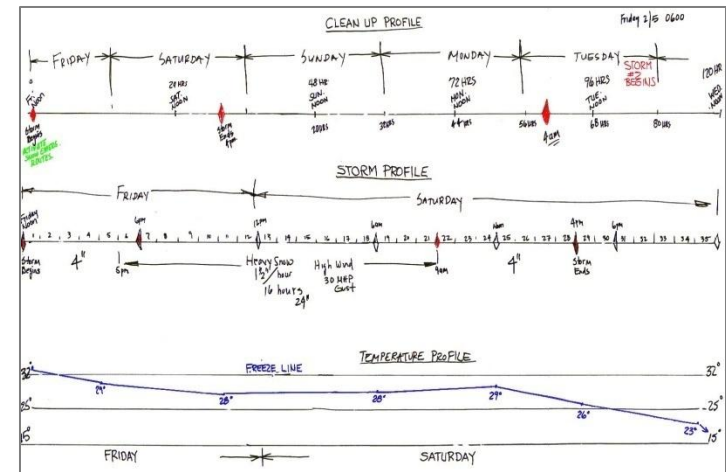


CDC Cold Brochure
(Click Image to View)



Methods for Incorporating Best Practices Into Future Snow Response

- **Rollout Annual Snow Emergency Readiness Campaign**
 - Further augment existing PIO efforts and emphasize initial goal of snow removal is for all emergency response to be within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of all residents
- **Create YouTube and County Cable Videos That Provide an Overview of Snow Operations**
 - Create multiple videos of varying length that provide an overview of most pertinent aspects of storm response in a visual medium
- **Provide Access to All Snow Education Content Online**
 - Provide portable document format of “When it Snows” brochure on website
- **Update County Snow Website and Link to Federal Government Websites that Provide Information on Snow Emergency Preparation**
 - Leverage no cost information resources from Ready.gov; CDC; and others



Snow Operations Example: Event Timeline



Current Montgomery County Snow Emergency Public Messaging Practices

- **Alert Montgomery Messaging System**
 - Provided updates on weather, snow operations, closings, etc to over 140,000 devices
- **Mass Media Relations**
 - Joint response effort by PIO, OEMHS, DOT, and CEX to respond to media
 - PIO generated press releases
 - Initially snow operations held updates for the media, PIO assumed responsibility when information burden became too high
- **County Cable Montgomery (CCM)**
 - Mostly video of traffic conditions, with scrolling text information about weather conditions, reminders to stay home and off the roads, program and service delays and closings, free parking at public garages to get cars off the side streets, numbers to call to report missed plow routes and where to call for help
 - Information provided on the County home page was mentioned on CCM

Initial articulation efforts should focus on creating a joint message and activating emergency communication resources



Current Montgomery County Best Practice – Alert Montgomery

Alert Montgomery Growth

6/30/2006	12/8/2008	12/9/2008	3/11/2009
10,225	37,493	46,764	52,527
8/27/2009	11/5/2009	12/30/2009	4/16/2010
64,552	69,302	103,248	152,470

Local Jurisdiction Benchmark

	Total Devices	Email	Pagers	Cell Phones
Montgomery County	142,608*	86,675	3,371	52,562
District of Columbia	107,550	61,800	2,450	43,300
Fairfax County	44,037	30,042	13,995	

* Does not include 10,001 devices registered in local municipalities as of 11/5/09

Operational Issues Affecting Alert Montgomery

- Fully functioning system is dependent on County IT infrastructure
- Catastrophic power failure to County server would prevent users from sending alerts from an external location
- Approximately 7% of Alert Montgomery users are County Employee email address that are also impacted by server outages
- Potential preventive measures include the use of remote servers in other jurisdictions, creation of redundant systems at the new Public Safety HQ, upgrades to existing UPS that include active power failure warnings



Potential Public Messaging Best Practices

The majority of jurisdictions use the same tools for articulating messages to the public, the key is to present a uniform message that meets the needs of the public

▪ FEMA: Media Guidance Best Practices

- During the early stages of an emergency or disaster, hold frequent briefings or press conferences
- Establish a joint information center (JIC) during the early stages of the disaster response. Be sure to set up accommodations for the press (seating areas, phone lines, faxes, etc.)
- Appoint a public information office (PIO) to deal with the media. The PIO then becomes a centralized voice for the event thus eliminating confusion and conflict about which source of information is correct, etc
- Plan for good intergovernmental relations to present a clear picture to the press of who is in charge

▪ City of Alexandria Storm Website

- Alexandria uses www.alexandriava.gov/storm as an easy to remember, vacant place holder location to articulate storm information



Source: FEMA "Tips For Dealing with the Media in a Disaster or Emergency"

Methods for Incorporating Best Practices into Future Snow Response

- **Continue to Expand Alert Montgomery Users**
 - Develop marketing efforts to expand registered devices
 - Examine options for the creation of redundancy systems in the event of county server failure
- **Revisit Roles and Responsibilities as Established in the County Emergency Operations Plan**
 - Codify which agency (DOT, OEMHS, CEX, PIO, MC311) has primary responsibility for communicating with the public during snow event in regard to shaping a unified message
 - i.e. With multiple departments directly interacting with the media and the public, who is responsible for ensuring that all information providers articulate the same message
 - Jurisdictions such as Fairfax collocate public affairs personnel at incident command center
 - WebEOC allows for online participation in emergency operations
- **Create and Publicize a montgomerycountymd.gov/storm Website**
 - Provide a single source for posting media releases, non-operational situation reports, and pertinent messaging
 - Utilize site during non-snow related major storm events if necessary
 - Link to educational materials provided on county snow website when necessary



Current Montgomery County Snow Emergency Practices for Responding to the Public

▪ MC311 Soft Launch

- DOT hotline calls were directed to MC311, resulting in an abnormally high call volume
- MC311 enlisted volunteers to assist in efforts, often volunteers had to utilize manual methods of complaint taking due to lack of training

▪ Montgomery County Snow Application

- Snow Application developed by DOT originally intended to function as a tool for internal operations and planning
- Application matured to include a map for public consumption that displays snow progress
- Once snow route is marked as complete, tool opens separate interface that allows public to report missed roads

▪ Montgomery County Social Media

- County leveraged social media such as Twitter and Facebook to push alerts to public during storm

Effective response to the demands of the public creates a ongoing dialogue that does not interfere with ongoing operations



Responding to the Public During Snow Emergency: Comparative Call Center Statistics

▪ MC311 Customer Service Center

- Handled 30,434 calls for February storm as well as 700 emails
- Requests for Service were taken primarily with the DOT Snow Application (damaged mailboxes, missed streets, icy intersections)
- 10,000 Siebel Service Requests during storm period

2/5/2010	2/6/2010	2/7/2010	2/8/2010	2/9/2010	2/10/2010
174	1612	4294	8633	5033	1217
2/11/2010	2/12/2010	2/13/2010	2/14/2010	2/15/2010	MC311 DOT Related Call Volume
3848	2867	1280	654	822	

▪ Fairfax VDOT Customer Service Center

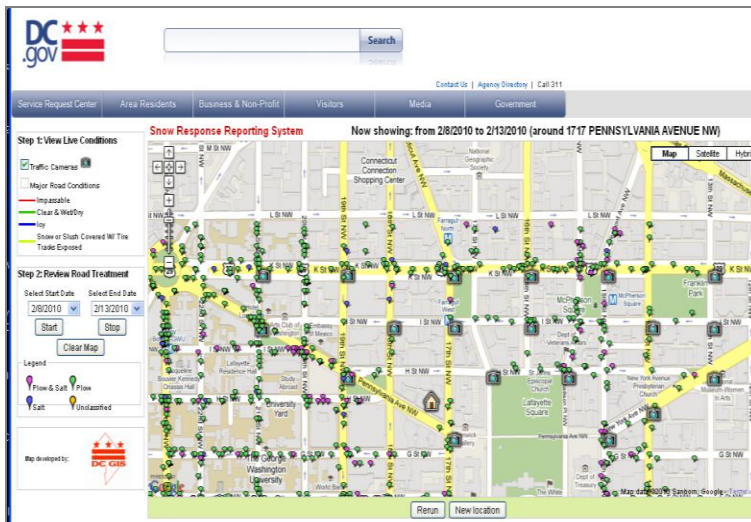
- 135 daily calls on non snow day; 300 daily calls for typical 6-inch storm; 34,000 calls for February storm as well as 5,000 emails
- Utilized dozens of employees working 12 hour shifts
- Asked residents to wait a few days before reporting “missed roads”
- Complaints are relayed via a geo-coded database to operations



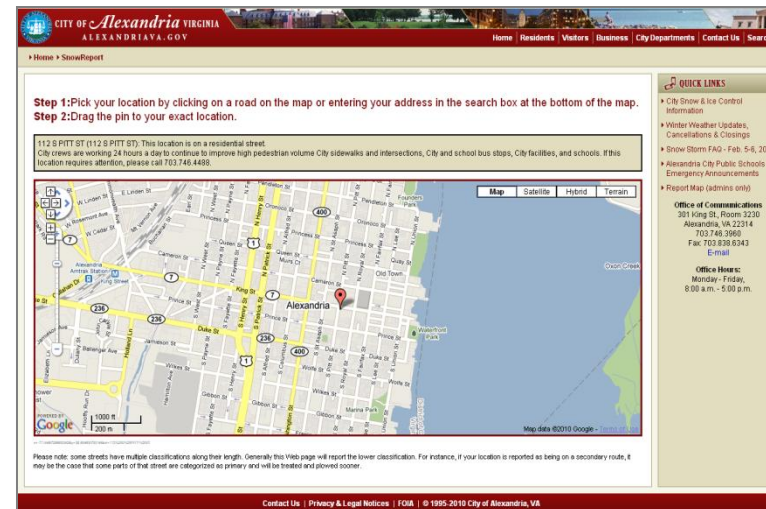
Potential Public Response Best Practices – Snow Removal Applications

- Snow removal applications allow residents to monitor progress
- Accurate applications require the use of GPS devices on snow removal equipment
- Best practices examples build off of the Google Maps format to provide ease of use to novice users
- Maps can link to existing traffic cameras to provide real-time visibility into road conditions

DC Snow Removal Map (Click For Link)



Alexandria Snow Removal Map (Click for Link)



Independent Rankings of Online Snow Removal Applications

OhMyGov.com: “10 Best Cities for Tracking Snow Removal Online”

- Ranked the 10 best cities for tracking snow removal online
- Looked for interactive maps, real-time (or near real-time information), schedules for future plowing, road condition stats, traffic information
- Took into account ease of location map from government homepage

1. Spokane, Washington	6. Anchorage, Alaska
2. District of Columbia	7. Waynesboro, Virginia
3. Louisville, KY	8. Winnipeg, Manitoba
4. Greensboro, NC	9. Longmont, Colorado
5. Howard County, MD	10. Seattle, Washington

A well functioning snow application does not necessary guarantee accuracy or more expedient snow removal



Responding to the Public: Twitter Social Media Utilization

Total Messages

Tweets Sent from Jan 30 th to Feb 28 th Related to Blizzard	Arlington	DC DOT	Fairfax	Montgomery	Alexandria
Report Pothole	1	1	2	0	1
Direct Snow Removal Contact	5	1	1	0	0
Weather Update	4	15	1	9	13
Snow Removal Progress Update	7	33	2	10	6
Openings/Closings/Delays	22	84	25	14	45
General Awareness/Guidance	7	84	17	21	24
Personal Responses/ReTweets	23	125	30	0	39
Calls for Volunteers	3	2	1	3	1
Thanking Residents	1	3	0	1	0
Shelter Information	3	0	3	4	4
Power Related	3	4	1	1	4
Total	79	352	83	63	137

Prince George's and Howard Counties did not use Twitter during the February Blizzard



Responding to the Public: Twitter Social Media Utilization

Percentage of Total Messages

Twitter Subscribers as of 4/19/10	Arlington VA	DC DOT	Fairfax VA	Montgomery MD	Alexandria VA
	1,291	3,030	2,637	2,346	1,328

Tweets Sent from Jan 30 th to Feb 28 th Related to Blizzard	Arlington	DC DOT	Fairfax	Montgomery	Alexandria	Average
Report Pothole	1.3%	0.3%	2.4%	0.0%	1%	0.9%
Direct Snow Removal Contact	6.3%	0.3%	1.2%	0.0%	0%	1.6%
Weather Update	5.1%	4.3%	1.2%	14.3%	9%	6.9%
Snow Removal Progress Update	8.9%	9.4%	2.4%	15.9%	4%	8.2%
Openings/Closings/Delays	27.8%	23.9%	30.1%	22.2%	33%	27.4%
General Awareness/Guidance	8.9%	23.9%	20.5%	33.3%	18%	20.8%
Personal Responses/ReTweets	29.1%	35.5%	36.1%	0.0%	28%	25.8%
Calls for Volunteers	3.8%	0.6%	1.2%	4.8%	1%	2.2%
Thanking Residents	1.3%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%	0%	0.7%
Shelter Information	3.8%	0.0%	3.6%	6.3%	3%	3.3%
Power Related	3.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.6%	3%	2.1%



Potential Response to Public Best Practices – Two-way Twitter Social Media Utilization

Examination of Tweets from an arbitrary day during the storm (February 9th), demonstrate the difference between using social media as an alert tool as opposed to a two-way communication tool

Fairfax Twitter

@CoastGumbo Please contact @VaDOT for snow removal assistance: 703-383-VDOT or e-mail novainfo@vdot.virginia.gov
4:49 PM Feb 9th via CoTweet in reply to CoastGumbo

Closed Wednesday: County government, courts, schools, Connector bus, libraries, rec/community centers and more:
<http://go.usa.gov/l17>
4:42 PM Feb 9th via CoTweet

@herndonviews Arlington County has opened a shelter, not Fairfax. Thanks in advance for correcting info.
4:23 PM Feb 9th via CoTweet in reply to herndonviews

@restonviews Arlington County has opened a shelter, not Fairfax. Thanks in advance for correcting info.
4:23 PM Feb 9th via CoTweet in reply to restonviews

As snow continues to accumulate, be sure to monitor the roof of your house or building for signs of distress. <http://go.usa.gov/ln4>
3:00 PM Feb 9th via CoTweet

Montgomery Twitter

February 10, except for essential personnel.
5:45 PM Feb 9th via web

Ride On service to cease at 10 p.m. tonight. No service tomorrow.
<http://bit.ly/99fLvc>
5:35 PM Feb 9th via web

County trash/recycling pickups are cancelled for rest of week.
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=6281
5:28 PM Feb 9th via web

Winter Storm Update from County Executive Ike Leggett.
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=6284
5:26 PM Feb 9th via web

free parking through Thursday in County garages/lots. For maps, <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dot/parking/gallery.asp>
2:48 PM Feb 9th via web



Methods for Incorporating Best Practices into Future Snow Response

- **Examine Alternative Methods for a Public Facing Snow Removal Application**
 - Conduct cost/benefit analysis of existing systems
 - Research open source applications
- **Build a More Dynamic Level of Interaction Via Social Media**
 - Insert message content within character limit of Twitter as opposed to using links
 - Actively respond and solicit incoming messages
- **Hold Snow Emergency Q/A sessions**
 - Use existing County Executive Online Chat Module to hold online storm discussions



Existing County Executive Chat Module



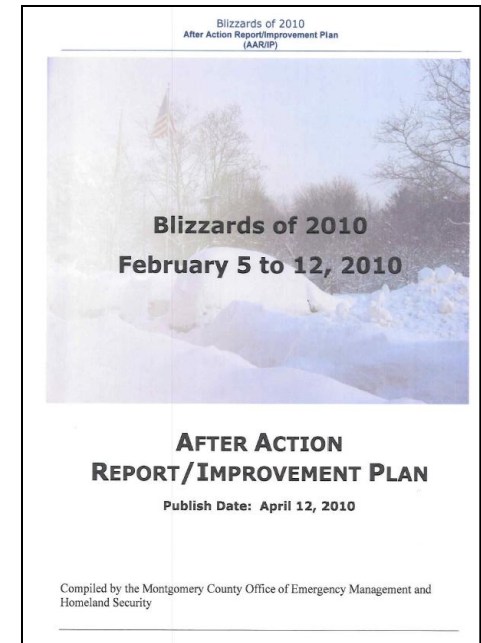
Current Montgomery County Snow Emergency Practices for Soliciting Post-Storm Feedback

■ Creation of an After Action Report

- The Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management drafted an After Action Report (AAR) on April 12th
- AAR contains an overview of the storm event and analysis of the county's capabilities, areas for improvement, and a list of corrective actions

■ County Council Session

- On March 9th, County Council held a session to discuss the County's response to the storm
- Focuses on 26 questions from Council members
- No written responses were generated for the session
- Content is available via the county website in the form of a 120 minute video



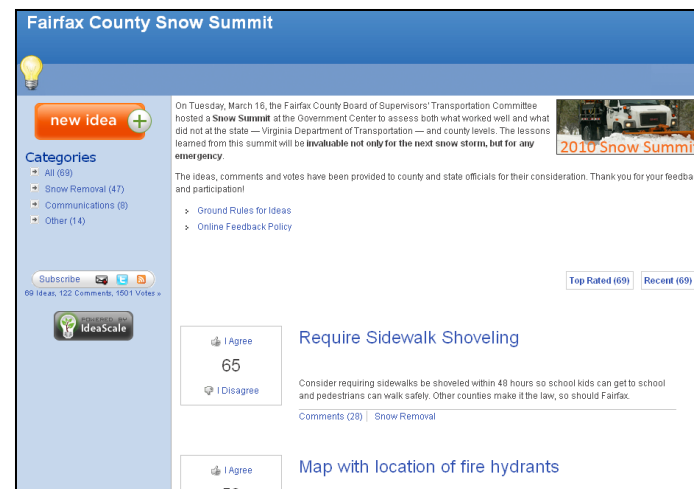
Best Practices For Soliciting Post-Storm Feedback

■ Fairfax Snow Summit Post Storm Feedback

- Fairfax County conducted a “Snow Summit” on March 16, 2010 to solicit the feedback of the community and discuss lessons learned
- County received 111 e-mails; 69 ideas, 120 comments, 1,416 votes and 5 phone messages in response to post storm outreach efforts
- County published all comments and ideas online in a manner that allows residents to vote on perceived good ideas

■ Fairfax use of IdeaScale to generate Ideas and Solicit Feedback

- Allows users to make suggestions and as others vote on the suggestions, best ideas reach the top of the list
- Allows administrator to shape discussions
- Incorporates Open Government model
- Used to handle large volume traffic from whitehouse.gov
- Focuses on qualitative analysis



Fairfax IdeaScale
(Click to View)



Methods for Incorporating Best Practices into Future Storm Response

- **Create an Interface that Allows Residents to Provide Feedback in Productive Manner**
 - Create IdeaScale site for Montgomery that allows residents to provide feedback to numerous issues
 - Draft responses to public ideas and make all of the information available via the county website
- **Post All Post-event Analysis in an Open and Transparent Manner**
 - Create online viewable slide presentations
 - Post e-mail and phone comments
 - Continue to promote video links to Council Sessions

A robust post-event analysis and feedback process ensures that lessons learned can be applied to other emergency events and prevents the duplication of previous error



Wrap-up

- Follow-up items



Review of Communication Issues In February Blizzard After Action Report

AAR Analysis of Capabilities Relevant to Communication

- **EOC and 311 Call Center Staffing**
 - **Synopsis:** EOC and 311 would benefit from additional trained staff
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Pre-identify and train non-public safety personnel to support 311 activities
 - Consider systems allowing for remote use of 311

- **Meetings and Response Staff Communications**
 - **Synopsis:** Uneven participation during EMG calls; others did not feel empowered to openly discuss issues
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Ensure that all departments are aware of regularly scheduled meetings and participants have decision making authority
 - Participant in internal departmental meetings should be present to effectively participate
 - Departments should resolve internal issues prior to participating on EMG calls



AAR Analysis of Capabilities Relevant to Communication

- **County Website Utilized for Snow Plowing Time Estimates**
 - **Synopsis:** Public accessing snow application tool on DOT's website did not receive helpful information
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Update snow application on website or discontinue use
- **Pay Eligibility**
 - **Synopsis:** County needs pre-determined guidance on pay eligibility during EOC activation
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Communicate with all staff on payroll and eligibility procedures within 24 hours of EOC activation
- **Disaster/GEN Codes**
 - **Synopsis:** Employees need better guidance on time codes during emergency closures
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Provide further guidance about when GEN codes are open and closed as well as general GEN code guidance



AAR Analysis of Capabilities Relevant to Communication

▪ EOC Training

- **Synopsis:** Departmental employees at the EOC did not always have adequate training, which prevented them from creating EOC logs, paperwork, and other documentation.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Create and implement a semi-annual training session on all EOC protocols, procedures and equipment for all personnel that are assigned to report to the EOC during a response effort
 - Develop and/or update all EOC position manuals as well as Departmental SOPs for each department in the EOC and ensure that they are ready and available for each activation.
 - Employees from each department (three deep) need to be pre-identified and trained to work in the EOC.
 - A representative from the PIO's office and from DTS must be in the EOC during all activations.



Process for Identifying and Implementing Best Practices

**Identified Through
Interviews with County
Staff**

**Current Montgomery
County Practice**

**Identified Through
Research of Surrounding
Jurisdiction Practice**

**Potential Best
Practices**

**Discussed During
CountyStat Session**

**Assess Best Practice
Validity**

**Departmental Follow-Up
Items**

**Create Implementation
Strategies**



Potential Best Practice for Internal Communication: VA Interoperability Picture for Emergency Response (VIPER)

- VIPER creates a real-time GIS analysis tool that provides operational information from multiple sources
 - Weather, traffic, infrastructure, fuel supplies, emergency shelters, and medical facilities can be fully integrated, analyzed, mapped, and disseminated for interagency situational awareness.
- WebEOC information links to VIPER system allowing analysts to develop greater context around potential severity of an incident

For Example: Information in WebEOC indicates a hazardous materials incident. VIPER instantly links this information with GIS layers that would identify the locations of nearby vulnerable populations or facilities

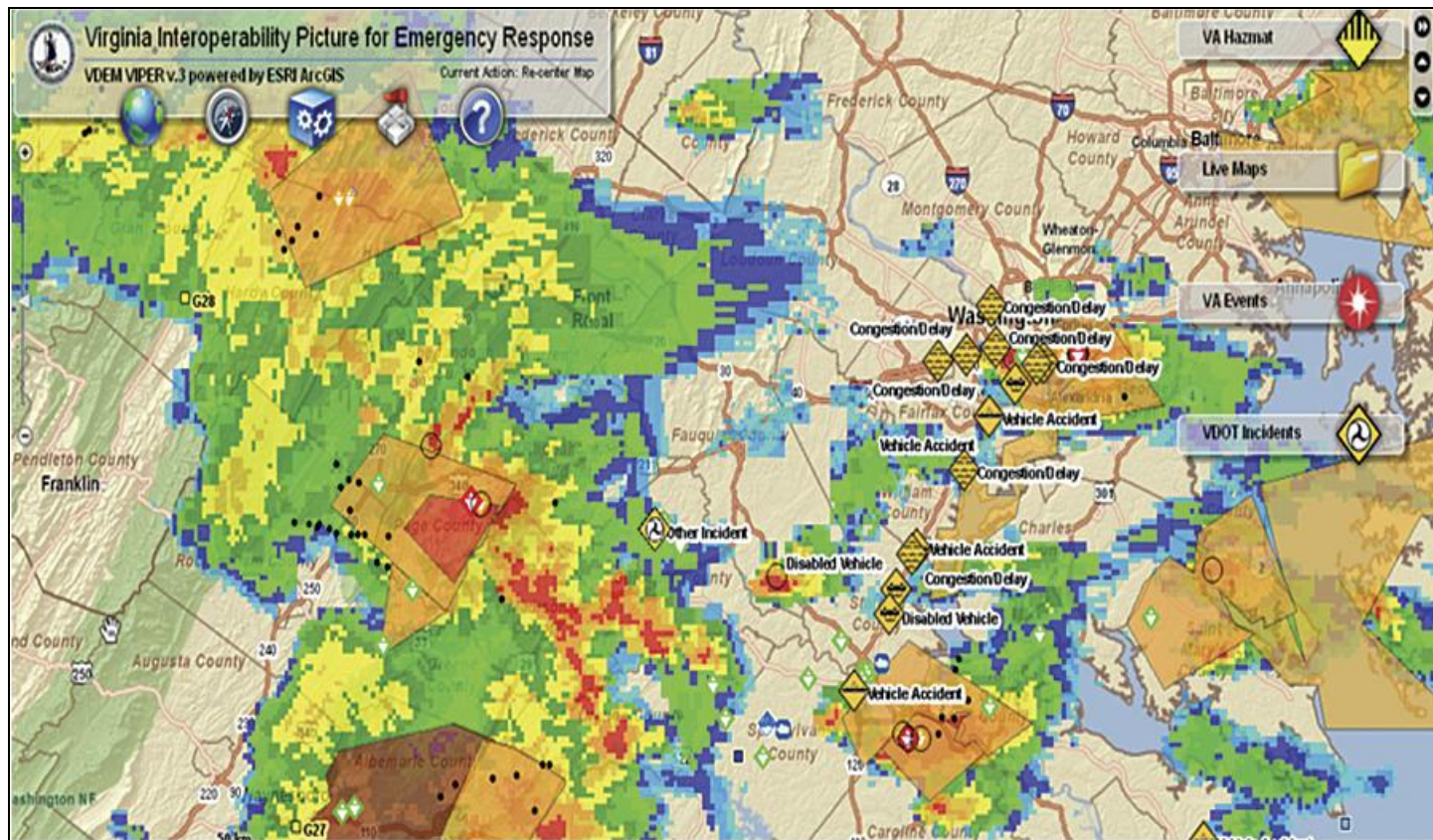
- VIPER is part of a larger effort of the Department of Homeland Security called the “Virtual USA Emergency Initiative” currently operating as a pilot program in eight states



Source: VDEM

<http://www.youtube.com/user/vdemvipr#p/a/u/1/tdfhz90rlcl>

Potential Best Practice for Internal Communication: VA Interoperability Picture for Emergency Response (VIPER)



VIPER includes a report by exception functionality that allows users to be alerted to particular events such as locations where temperatures are reaching the road freezing point



Snow Emergency Resident Response Best Practices: Incorporate Social Media into MC311 (SeeClickFix)

- Currently there are Montgomery County Residents using SeeClickFix
- SeeClickFix is a way for a resident to make note of a non-emergency issue in his/her neighborhood
- Works like an online bulletin board, where people can post issues that other people can then comment on and “vote up” its importance

SeeClickConnect

- SeeClickConnect is a method to integrate SeeClickFix into the MC311 system
- The website sends issues to MC311, and also receives issues from MC311.
- The County would also have access to the mobile and web platforms already developed by SeeClickFix, including a widget to embed on the County website, iPhone application, mobile web reporting, and Facebook integration.
- SeeClickConnect requires opening up the County’s 311 system and data to the SeeClickFix website

Goal of incorporating social media should be to increase access to data collection systems, not create more data repositories

